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GERMAN EXPERIENCES IN FLANDERS AND AT LENS.

(Reprint of a captured German document)

ARMY WAR COLLEGE,

February, 1918.

War Department
Document No. 760
Office of the Adjutant General.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, 25th Feb. 1918.

The following translation of a captured German document is published for the information of all concerned.

(062.1 A.G.O.)
By order of the Secretary of War,

JOHN BIDDLE,
Major General, Acting Chief of Staff.

Official;
H.P. McCain,
The Adjutant General.

Chief of the General Staff
of the Field Army.
Ia/II. Nr. 62865 op. SECRET.

G.H.Q.,
22-8-17.

Experiences in Flanders and at Lens.

The following tactical lessons gained in the battles in Flanders and at Lens are issued for information and action :—

1. For attacks on a large scale, the British lie down in successive lines in very close formation immediately in front of our most advanced posts. The advance is carried out from this point in waves, the troops advancing at a walk and maintaining close touch.

   The enemy by this method frequently escaped our annihilating fire, which had been opened on a zone farther to the rear, and also walked past the barrage put down at the commencement of his attack.

2. Therefore, when the enemy is seen to be assembling in this way, annihilating fire and the barrage will be brought back as close as possible to our own front line. This will ensure that at any rate the rear waves of the enemy's attack are caught.

3. Our trench garrisons must be concentrated as far as possible in small groups in strong points distributed chequerwise, and must be able by themselves to break the first assault of the hostile infantry by machine gun, trench mortar and rifle fire. The fire from strong points in rear must be poured through the gaps between those situated farther forward. Indirect machine gun fire can be usefully employed.

   Machine guns cannot be too numerous in the rearward parts of a defensive zone. Light *Minenwerfer* are also very useful.

   Neither of these weapons must ever be left without infantry support. Their proper place, therefore, is in the strong points round which the infantry concentrate in the fight. Strong points must be absolutely inconspicuous and must be

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4. Our counter-attack tactics have proved their value. It is better, however, for isolated individuals or very small detachments to use their rifles in the event of a large hostile attack, rather than to rush forward and attack, as in this case they are too easily overwhelmed.

Counter-attack divisions are to be placed under the orders of the divisional commander in whose sector they are operating, no consideration being paid to seniority.

On days of battle, counter-attack divisions must be close at hand, either wholly or in part, like all other reserves; they must be thrown in at the right time, and must also be allowed to act on their own initiative.

5. Mobile artillery, which moves forward in the battle area close behind the infantry and fires with open sights and direct observation, is at first in a better position to engage the enemy's troops, which have broken through, than is artillery previously in action, firing from normal positions, known to the enemy.

Counter-attack divisions or their component parts must, therefore, have mobile artillery at their disposal; it is also advisable for some mobile artillery to be held in readiness in the normal divisional sectors, in order to accompany local counter-attacks.

Battery positions and the siting of observing stations (close to the batteries) must ensure the engagement of the enemy, after he has penetrated our positions, to a greater degree than was formerly the case.

6. Low-flying patrols are not special formations. Reconnaissance flights and protective flights must be trained in this work. It is advisable to let the low-flying patrols in the divisional sectors fly in small groups one behind the other. The enemy's infantry and artillery are the targets for their machine gun fire.

7. It has been suggested that wire obstacles should be constructed, not as hitherto, but less closely meshed and higher (wire-fencing), so as to be less easily detected. This applies particularly to the preparation of the defensive zone.

(*Signed*) LUDENDORFF.

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